

Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

Spring 2006

Public-private cooperation promotes wildlife viewing

By Dr. Jeff Koenings, WDFW Director

Those of you in our Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program know how “watchable” wildlife can be.

But the idea that Washington’s diversity of wildlife is part of our state’s resident, business and tourist draw — and that it’s almost a billion dollar annual industry — is still new to some.

That’s why the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the departments of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED), Parks, Natural Resources, and Transportation, and the Washington Audubon Society, for collaboration of efforts to promote wildlife viewing.

Upcoming MOU projects include a complete re-design of the state’s tourism website, with a focus on wildlife viewing points of interest from Washington’s scenic highways, and coordination of the next statewide Watchable Wildlife conference Sept. 14-15 in Richland with the city council and local visitors’ bureau.

Continued on page 4

Where do feeder birds go in Spring?

Many Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary managers enjoy a menagerie of birds through the winter at their feeding stations and miss the familiar crowd come Spring.

Some who provide supplemental feed year-round wonder why many birds stop coming for free meals, especially at a time when they need extra energy and nutrition for the rigors of breeding and nesting.

But therein lies part of the answer.

Many birds are now on their nesting territories, which may no longer include a backyard feeding station they frequented earlier in the year. Birds are not as territorial during the winter and will congregate in much greater numbers at feeders and other foraging spots. When the days grow longer and breeding rituals are triggered, they tend to stay in a relatively smaller territory, defending it from other birds.

It’s true that many birds really chow down just before or during the mating season. In fact, March and April can be among the busiest times at backyard feeding stations, including visits by newly arrived migrant species.

But it’s likely fewer individuals coming back repeatedly to a feeder that is within their nesting territory, or migrants moving through and stopping in to feed for a couple days.



Photo by Toby Gloss

Another explanation is that many birds shift their diets as spring unfolds and other preferred foods become available. Seeds and suet just can’t compete with green buds and newly emerged insects, caterpillars, worms, and other fresh sources of protein.

In response to that diet change and spring newcomers, many who like to feed year-round provide mealworms and other fresher fare.

Continued on page 4

Crossing Paths is a quarterly newsletter for Washington residents enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program and others interested in urban/suburban wildlife.



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Protect urban watersheds

(CP Editor's Note: The following illustrates yet another good reason to manage a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary.)

By Tom Murdoch
Special to The Seattle Times

When we were kids, my brother and I took great delight in going down to the creek that flowed behind my grandmother's house. We would sit quietly next to a pool in the stream and watch trout nosing around tree branches and stumps that had fallen in the water. On hot summer days, we would dive into the creek to cool off. Sometimes we would splash around and try to find giant salamanders that we called "mudpuppies." Kids and creeks just go together like peanut butter and jelly.

Unfortunately, kids today must be a lot more cautious around creeks in urban/suburban environments: Most small streams are no longer suitable for recreation. Bad news if you happen to have an urge to jump into the neighborhood fish'n' hole — a shower is necessary afterward and if you drink the water there is a good chance you will get sick. Really bad news if you happen to be a fish: Your local creek may prove fatal!

(Note: State and local research finds all urban streams from Arlington to Tacoma, including every stream flowing into Lake Washington, unsuitable for contact recreation; University of Washington researchers found Lake Washington's resident fish too toxic for human consumption.)

Next to healthy salmon streams, you will find a wide stand of vegetation called riparian zones. Trees and shrubs provide shade that cools the air temperature that, in turn, keeps the water cool and highly oxygenated. Roots from riparian vegetation filter out many of the pollutants from the land around your stream, called a watershed.

Now, fall is here. Juvenile salmon that hatched out last spring and survived have grown a few inches; they are migrating to Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean. At the same time, adult salmon from your stream are making a reverse migration, coming back to spawn future generations. Then they die.

Their bodies become a source of food for a wide variety of wildlife and microorganisms in your creek. They also supply nutrients to your creek's riparian vegetation, which, in turn, supplies leaf litter, fallen logs and branches that become hiding places for fish. Riparian material also provides habitat for underwater insects that will become food for juvenile salmon hatching out in your stream next spring. Everything is linked together... that is what ecology is all about.

Sadly, we have not been very good stewards of our urban watersheds. Sprawling development covering the landscape with rooftops, parking lots and driveways is in vogue. "Vertical development" on a small footprint surrounded by open space has not caught on yet in Puget Sound country. As a consequence, open space is disappearing and riparian zones are shrinking. Stream flows are rapidly changing from moderate to very high with flooding during rainy periods, and very low when it is dry. Numbers of underwater insects are shrinking, as the riparian zones get smaller... and so are the numbers of salmon.

So, what can you do?

Contact your local government public works/planning department and the state Ecology or Fish and Wildlife departments. Find out what watershed you live in, which fish live in your home stream, and the quality of your home stream's biology and water quality. Ask if future land-use plans will not only



Photo by James Cummins

accommodate new human populations, but also protect your stream's salmon at the same time. Learn about any local stream-protection initiatives and how you and your children can get involved.

Consider adding "green" features to your house (rain barrels or green roofs), condo or apartment (storm-drain filters for your parking lots). Check out "low-impact development" on the Internet for ideas. Convert your lawn into a landscape for wildlife using drought-tolerant native plants that don't require fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Join a local stream-enhancement group. Encourage your children and their schoolmates to "adopt a stream." This can be fun.

By the way, not only do salmon return to your watershed in the fall, candidates for city, town and county councils are also there seeking your support. Find out their views on your watershed's ecology. Then cast a well-thought-out vote. That action is a critically important step that you can take to make your local creek safe for kids and fish once again.

Tom Murdoch is director of Adopt-A-Stream Foundation, www.streamkeeper.org, based at the Northwest Stream Center in Snohomish County, and co-author of the "Streamkeeper's Field Guide: Watershed Inventory and Stream Monitoring Methods."

Puget Sound Bird Fest is May 12-13

The annual Puget Sound Bird Fest in Edmonds, May 12-13, features expert speakers, guided outdoor birding walks, special field trips by bus and boat, workshops, and children's activities.



Coinciding with International Migratory Bird Day on the second Saturday of May, the festival is an ideal time for learning about and viewing some of the over 200 species of birds identified in Edmonds. Beginning bird and nature enthusiasts as well as more advanced birders will enjoy the varied schedule of events, the expert guides, and the diverse habitats to explore in Edmonds.

This year the festival extends into the evening with two keynote

addresses and receptions, offering visitors an opportunity to socialize with other birding and nature enthusiasts. On Friday evening, May 12, WDFW's Urban Wildlife Biologist Russell Link will speak on "Gardening on the Wing: Bats, Bees, Birds & Butterflies" at the Edmonds Conference Center. Link is the author of "Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest" and "Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest". On Saturday evening, May 13, the festival concludes with

nationally-recognized and award-winning nature photographer John Hendrickson speaking on "A Celebration of Raptors" at the Wade James Theater.

Hendrickson's photos have been exhibited in over 40 American museums and published in National Geographic, Sierra Club, Newsweek, National Wildlife and other magazines. He also directs the Woodleaf Outdoor School, a large environmental education center in California.

Most festival activities are free of charge, some are by suggested donation. Check the website for updated information and the schedule of events.
www.pugetsoundbirdfest.com

June 25: Spokane Backyard Wildlife/Sustainable Garden Tour

The Backyard Wildlife and Sustainable Gardening tour debuts in Spokane County on Sunday, June 25.

The tour, which operates open-house style from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., showcases both public and private landscapes that provide habitat for wildlife in urban and suburban settings, some which use native, low-water-use, and drought-tolerant plants.

The tour replaces WDFW's annual June "Backyard Bird and Plant Fair" that was hosted for the past 15 years at local nurseries.

It will include the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) recently-planted native and drought-tolerant landscaping at the agency's new Spokane Valley regional headquarters. It will also feature "The Green Zone," a public

sustainability demonstration site on the grounds of the Spokane County Conservation District, including a small Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary. Several private residences of various sizes and neighborhoods, enrolled in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program in Spokane County, are also a part of the tour.

Tour registration, which costs \$5, can be made after May 1 at Washington State University Extension Master Gardener Clinic at N. 222 Havana St., or at the WDFW office at 2315 N. Discovery Place, north of I-90 between the Pines and Evergreen road exits, off Mirabeau Parkway. The addresses and directions to the private residences on the tour are provided, along with a packet of materials on backyard wildlife and sustainable gardening, upon registration.



April 12: Add a tree

"The cultivation of trees is the cultivation of the good, the beautiful and the ennobling of man," wrote National Arbor Day Founder J. Sterling Morton.

Add a tree to your Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary on April 12 — Washington State celebrates Arbor Day each year on the second Wednesday of April.

Find out more at <http://www.arborday.org/states/?state=WA>

Public-private cooperation promotes wildlife viewing (cont. from page 1)

Just this year the watchable wildlife promotion effort received a good boost with a \$643,823 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant to help complete the final three of seven Great Washington State Birding Trail maps and signs.

This Audubon-led project steers travelers to the best places for birdwatching in the Evergreen State. Each route is composed of 50 to 70 individual sites, with information about which season to see what species of birds, travel directions, site ownership, and visitor services. These sites enhance rural economic development and encourage local conservation of birds, other wildlife and their habitat.

The new federal dollars, administered by the Washington Department of Transportation's Highways and Local Programs division, join state and local investments in this birding trail system.

The first trail map was the Cascade Loop, published in 2002, followed by the Coulee Corridor in 2003, and the Southwest Loop in 2005. The Olympic Peninsula trail map is scheduled for release at the

end of this year. The new funding will cover development of the Puget Sound, Columbia River, and Northeast Washington trail maps.

The Northeast trail will include WDFW's newest acquisition – Reardan's Audubon Lake in Lincoln County, just west of Spokane. This 278-acre wetland provides critical habitat for more than 200 species of birds and other wildlife just off Highway 2 in the town of Reardan. The purchase was approved and funded by the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, but it was really made possible by the work of the Inland Northwest Land Trust, Spokane Audubon Society, the town of Reardan, and Reardan Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the latter two entities have formed the Reardan Public Development Authority, which will locally manage the property and already envisions a community birdwatching event.

The Reardan site, as well as the overall birding trail system and the other projects we'll be involved in under the new Watchable Wildlife MOU, have a key element in common — cooperation from local government, businesses and

volunteers. Their investments of time and enthusiasm are invaluable to spreading the word about watchable wildlife, and reaping the benefits. We hope to foster more of that cooperative spirit in future projects.

For more information on the Great Washington State Birding Trail and to order maps, go to:

<http://wa.audubon.org>

or call 1-866-WA-BIRDS

“Gardening on the Wing” in Spokane July 6

WDFW wildlife biologist Russell Link will address the Inland Empire Gardeners in Spokane July 6 on “Gardening on the Wing: Bats, Bees, Birds and Butterflies.”

Using examples from his Whidbey Island wildlife sanctuary, Link will provide tried and true ways to manage wildlife habitat around homes and properties. He'll include timesaving approaches to landscape design, and placement of nesting boxes, bat houses, bird feeders, ponds, and specialty gardens. Link, a 12-year veteran of WDFW and the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program, authored the books “Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest” and “Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest.”

The garden club meeting is open to the public and begins at 7 p.m. at Decades Meeting Place, 10502 E. Sprague at University City Mall in Spokane.

Where do feeder birds go in Spring? (cont. from page 1)

Bluebirds in particular are known to use feeders that offer those options.

A word of caution to year-round bird feeding enthusiasts: keep feeders as clean and dry as possible to avoid spreading disease. Clean feeders weekly with a ten percent chlorine bleach solution and dry thoroughly. Use tube feeders only, instead of platform or hopper feeders with flat surfaces that collect more droppings and other dirt that may spread disease. Regularly pick up and discard feed spilled on the ground. Reduce the number of feeders so birds have more space.

This can be most challenging in wetter, warmer spring and summer conditions. It may be easier and wiser to simply stop feeding for several months. The birds WILL find other natural sources of food.

Citizen Science – Your contributions matter!

By Patricia Thompson, WDFW
wildlife biologist

“Citizen Scientists” are used more and more to amass the quantities of data unattainable to a single biologist or even agency.

There are national research projects using volunteer observers to track and assess wildlife populations, like Project FeederWatch (birds.cornell.edu/pfw/), the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/) and the Breeding Bird Surveys (www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/).

WDFW is emerging as one of the leaders among states using groups of volunteers for data collection projects. The WDFW Winter Backyard Bird Survey* was the beginning of large citizen science effort. NatureMapping was born in Washington. And now we have embarked on a statewide effort, the Citizen Science Network, to unite communities around citizen scientists and their data.

The Citizen Science Network (CSN) will provide the opportunity for citizens to help meet the scientific data needs of their community through a give-and-take partnership with government, academic, and private organizations. CSN includes Eco-regional Citizen Science Support Centers to serve as training hubs and data repositories.

CSN will not just train volunteers to collect and contribute sound data, but will build the capacity of citizens to investigate their natural environment, facilitate sustainable decision-making, inspire appreciation for scientific inquiry, and encourage young people to pursue careers in the natural sciences. In these ways, citizen science helps people as well as wildlife. It's highly rewarding and enriches the lives of participants

who are better able to make decisions about wildlife management and protection. Volunteers are introduced to the science of data collection that turns hobbies into valuable contributions. Many participants in our Winter Backyard Bird Survey said the experience elevated them to a higher plane of enjoyment and appreciation of birds.

Richard Louv coined the term “Nature Deficit Disorder” as a way of emphasizing our growing disconnect with nature and the consequences of this separation to both humans and the planet (see Louv’s book, “Last Child in the Woods – Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder”, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005).

Demographics and wildlife diversity studies indicate that the majority of people now live in the most ecologically impoverished areas. Billions of people have fewer opportunities to interact with or develop an appreciation for the natural world. Growing bodies of research and anecdotal evidence have linked today’s childhood maladies of attention deficit disorder, obesity and depression to a societal alienation from the natural world.

Because nearby surroundings shape people’s perception of nature and the state of ecological health, conservation in general suffers from this nature deprivation. Projects involving citizens connect urban/suburban dwellers with nearby nature.

Even if there is a little of the “natural world” in your



neighborhood, if you can experience it, there is great benefit to your attitude on nature and conservation, and to your overall health. CSN seeks to involve citizens in the nature surrounding their homes.

All citizen science projects, such as the WDFW Winter Backyard Bird Surveys, present an opportunity to involve new or relatively new birders and wildlife observers in a wildlife science activity. Today’s beginning birder may someday become a healthy, knowledgeable conservation advocate, scientific researcher, wildlife manager or a citizen who supports measures to protect or restore avian habitat.

Watch for more news on the Citizen Science Network. And whenever you can, we encourage you to take up the call to become a Citizen Scientist!

Winter Backyard Bird Survey Report Coming

The final report on WDFW’s Winter Backyard Bird Survey, conducted from 1992 through 2002, will be available later this year.

Big bird is part of the family

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary managers Jim and Trudie McFall of Auburn see a lot of birds on their place, but none has made itself at home quite like a ring-necked pheasant this past year.

By mid-winter when snow cover became compacted and icy, a pheasant that had occasionally shared ground feeder space with a myriad of small birds in the yard started exploring their deck.

“We’d come home and find pheasant foot prints all over our deck and were surprised that he would come so close to the house,” Trudie wrote.

The bold bird started making regular deck visits and the McFalls started regularly cleaning up large droppings.

“One day I came home to find my cat staring out at the pheasant, who was happily roosting on my welcome mat two inches from my sliding glass



Photo by Jim and Trudie McFall

door, with one foot tucked up in his feathers.”

Then came the day when both Jim and Trudie heard something hit the glass and witnessed their cat rush to see the pheasant lightly knocking on the glass with his beak.

“We have now come to the conclusion that because we have not

seen him with a female pheasant,” Trudie wrote, “he comes and visits with our female cat, takes a nap on our mat, and drops a calling card or two on the deck.”

Editor’s Note: If you’ve got an interesting Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary story or pictures to share, please contact me at luersmel@dfw.wa.gov.

To dye or not to dye humming nectar

It’s long been known that hummingbirds are attracted to nectar-producing flowers by their shades of red.

You can bank on seeing these tiny jewels of the bird world using deep orange to near purple blossoms of azaleas, bleeding heart, butterfly bush, cardinal flower, columbine, coral bells, dahlia, delphinium, elderberry, fuchsias, gladiolus, hollyhock, honeysuckle, penstemon, petunias, phlox, scarlet bergamot, snapdragons, and other similarly-colored flowering plants.

So the practice of putting red dye or food coloring in sugar-water solutions for hummingbird feeders also has a long history.

But is it bad for the birds?

Today’s Internet websites, chat rooms, bulletin boards and e-mail exchanges among bird enthusiasts reveal much debate on this issue.

No scientific study to date has definitely answered that question for once and for all, but there is plenty of circumstantial evidence indicating that it is probably unsafe.

One thing we know for sure: dying humming nectar red is not necessary because most feeders already have something red on them to attract the birds.

We also know that hummingbirds can be harmed from consuming a heavy sugar syrup or a prepared nectar that grows mold or fungus. To avoid these problems, always use a solution that is no more than one

part sugar to four parts water. Always boil the water, stir the sugar until completely dissolved, and cool completely before filling feeders. Never use honey because it helps fungus grow and contains botulism toxins that can kill birds. Never use artificial sweeteners because they contain no calories for the birds.

WDFW advises first and foremost landscaping with some of the flowering plants that attract hummingbirds naturally. If you want to provide supplemental nectar in feeders close to the house so that you can easily watch the birds, follow the solution preparation tips above, don’t add red color to it, and make sure your red-colored feeder is kept clean.

Celebrate wildlife at special events

Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival, April 28-30, 11th annual, Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge, Bowerman Basin near Hoquiam. Shorebird viewing, extended field trips, lectures, food and exhibits. <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>
More info: 1-800-303-8498.

Spokane Bird Fest, May 6, West Valley School District Outdoor Learning Center, 8706 E. Upriver Dr. Day-long open house for families with raptor demonstrations, bird feeder and nestbox construction, Audubon "Learn to Bird" classes, field trips

to Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Contact Center at 509-340-1028 or www.wvolc.org for more information.

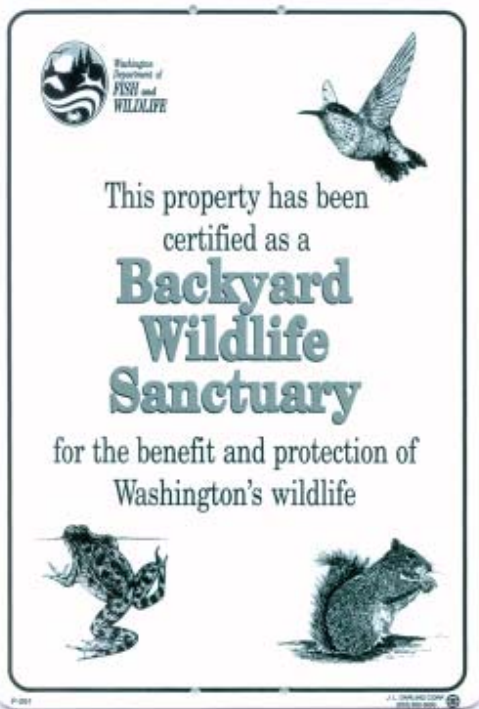
Get Intimate with Shrub-Steppe, May 13, Ellensburg, Umtanum Canyon Recreation Area, Guided nature hikes into shrub-steppe, hands-on science projects, art, exhibits, games. Kittitas Environmental Education Network 509-962-1520 or <http://www.kittitasee.net/pages/5/index.htm>

Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Fair, May 13, 6th annual, Tukwila (Seattle Metro area). Learn how to certify

your yard as a wildlife habitat sanctuary; workshops on gardening & landscaping for wildlife; tour certified wildlife gardens; learn about sustainable living; kids' activities; arts & crafts, food, music. (206) 768-2822 <http://www.backyardwildlifefair.org>

Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, May 18-21, 3rd annual, Leavenworth. Birding, geology, wildflowers and conservation.

Register with Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce, 509-548-5807 or at <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/>



Time for a new sign?

If you need a replacement or additional **Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary** outdoor sign, you can get one at the Mill Creek or Spokane Valley WDFW offices for just \$3 each if you pick it up, \$4 if mailed.

Westside:
16018 Mill Creek Blvd.
Mill Creek, WA 98012
425-775-1311

Eastside:
2315 N. Discovery Place
Spokane Valley, WA 99216
509-892-1001

Earth Day is April 22

From Bainbridge Island to Spokane, the 36th anniversary of Earth Day will be celebrated on April 22 with fairs, festivals, rallies, and other events offering sustainability information and earth-friendly activities.

Details are available at :

<http://www.earthday.net/>

Spokane area volunteers?

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Manager Volunteers in the Spokane area are needed to help spread their enthusiasm for the program at various local events throughout the year.

WDFW wildlife biologist Howard Ferguson explains that for lack of time and staff, he has to turn down frequent requests for program promotion at everything from birding festivals to tradeshow.

Volunteers enrolled and versed in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program are occasionally needed to simply set up, distribute pamphlets, sometimes staff, and take down a tabletop display. Interested volunteers should contact Ferguson at 509-892-1001 Ext. 328 or at ferguhlh@dfw.wa.gov.

Enroll your property as a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary

Some of you reading this are likely not enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) program, now that this newsletter is available over our Internet website to all browsers, and by e-mail notification to those who sign up.

“Crossing Paths with Wildlife in Washington’s Cities and Towns” began in 1992 as the newsletter of the BWS program, which began in 1985 to help urban and suburban property owners create habitat for wildlife.

The BWS program is an outreach effort with a how-to packet about landscaping for wildlife, supplemental feeding, and other information, available for \$5

through WDFW’s two urban-centered regional offices in Seattle (Mill Creek) and Spokane. Those who complete the habitat inventory included in the packet and return it with a \$5 enrollment fee receive a BWS weather-proof yard sign and frameable certificate, and are added to our mailing list.

This newsletter was originally printed and mailed only to those who enrolled in the program. Most of the content is about managing a backyard wildlife sanctuary, although we also include a wide variety of information of interest to all wildlife viewing and appreciation enthusiasts who usually don’t fish or hunt.

A few years ago we began providing an electronic copy of the

newsletter for BWS enrollees who wanted to help us save paper and mailing costs, or simply preferred to read it on-line. Starting with last fall’s edition, we shifted to an all-electronic newsletter (which can be downloaded and printed out for those who prefer something in hand), due to tight staff and goods and services budgets.

If you are a new reader of “Crossing Paths” and not enrolled in the BWS program, we encourage you to learn and involve yourself more by obtaining the extensive information packet and certifying your property with a yard sign and certificate. All details are at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/>.

Picture one of these on YOUR car*!

****or truck, trailer or motorcycle***



**Wildlife -themed
license plates
available now!**



wdfw.wa.gov

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